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RUEHJO/AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG 9147
RUEH DU/AMCONSUL DURBAN 0918

UNCLAS PRETORIA 000884

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EEB/MTA FOR Jack Bobo
STATE PASS USTR FOR Melissa Clarkson
USDA FOR FAS/OSTA/NTPMD Priscilla Joseph and Farah Naim

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EAGR](#) [ETRD](#) [TBIO](#)

SUBJECT: South Africa's Response to CCFL Demarche

REF: State 038413

¶1. Ag Attache provided reftel demarche points to the South African Codex Point of Contact, Malose Daniel Matlala, Deputy Director, Inter-agency Liaison and Regulatory Nutrition, Department of Health, Directorate of Food Control on April 24, 2009. The official responded that South Africa will not send a delegation to the Calgary meeting for administrative reasons.

¶2. In a written response to the demarche, Mr. Matlala acknowledges the USG's request for support of its proposal on labeling of foods and food ingredients obtained through GM/GE. He states, however, that South Africa is not in a position to comment on the issue in view of the possibility that the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) might require mandatory labeling under the proposed Consumer Protection Bill. Since the Bill's mandatory labeling requirement is based on a consumer's "right to know" and is not related to food safety or public health concerns, Mr. Matlala suggested that the Department of Health's Directorate of Food Control will continue to discuss the implementation of this requirement with the DTI.

¶3. Note: Subsequent to the Directorate's written response, the President of South Africa signed the Consumer Protection Bill into law on April 30.

¶3. Comment: Over the past year, OAA/Pretoria has been reviewing with FAS/Washington and State/EEB the implications of this mandatory GM labeling requirement on agricultural biotechnology developments in South Africa and the region. Post has received funding from State/EEB to bring U.S. speakers on the subject to reach out to Parliament and others involved on the practicalities of implementing mandatory GMO labeling. Since this bill also has the potential to affect U.S. food imports into South Africa, OAA/Pretoria has requested funding from the FAS/Emerging Market Program to support an educational trip for regulators and media to the United States. This funding was not approved in FY09, but will be resubmitted for consideration in FY10. End Comment.